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# The Development of Anthropological Theory at the University of Chicago and Columbia University, 1931-1937

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## II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, 1931-1937

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This dissertation deals with the academic institutionalization of anthropology during the Depression years at Chicago and Columbia. I have attempted to examine what Dr. Leslie White has called the "social organization of ethnological theory" in order to explain the quality and quantity of research and theory produced by graduate students of these two institutions. Specific emphasis is given to those students who studied with Radcliffe-Brown and Robert Redfield in the years 1931 to 1937 and those who worked under Franz Boas and Ruth F. Benedict during approximately the same period. In addition to the academic context, other factors and personalities that influenced the development of student work will be investigated. Foremost among these are: funding foundations, general economic conditions, professional organizations, museums, and such persons as Edward Sapir, Ralph Linton, Margaret Mead, Abram Kardiner, Melville Herskovits, and others.

I have asked if the academic context alone can explain the emergence of anthropological theory. Also I have investigated the ideological presuppositions underlying theory. This latter investigation is undertaken so that "1930's" anthropological theory might be related to concurrent ideas in other areas of American thought and literature. Among other things, I have tried to understand: (1) The nature of an intellectual community in terms of the ways in which people work, live and think together i.e., the problems, suffering and happiness of persons involved in a common endeavor, (2) The psychology of persons involved in pioneering activities, (3) The purposes and meanings attached to the notion "anthropology" by technically qualified persons, and (4) The psychological and sociological implications of particular anthropological methods of categorizing human phenomena.

Ultimately my investigation suggests that Dr. White's model is not really adequate historically. There was no Boasian school of thought at Columbia nor was there a Radcliffe-Brown manner of thinking in Chicago work. Nevertheless the model is useful as a reference point in explaining this fact. Given the particular historical situations of Chicago and Columbia during the 1930's, schools might have formed. My study explains why the aforementioned model does not fit the facts.

My conclusions are based upon several kinds of evidence: examination of the Ruth Benedict Papers, the papers of Franz Boas, documents from the Central Files at Columbia, and various collections of papers at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Archives. As well I have studied published secondary accounts, published anthropological writings, and other kinds of published materials. Also I have corresponded with and interviewed many alumni from the period.